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ABSTRACT

The current wave of reform in education, often referred to as systemic change, requires specific evaluation needs, especially at the school district level. Evaluation must address both the local district effort for systemic reform and restructuring. The state and national need to demonstrate accomplishment of student outcomes and adherence to professional standards should be taken into consideration. As evaluators of the Michigan Statewide Systemic Initiative (MSSI), a National Science Foundation sponsored program for reform of mathematics and science education, the authors operate under the premises that everyone is a stakeholder in the evaluation and that all stakeholders need to be actively and collaboratively involved. A collaborative, constructivist approach to evaluating the MSSI gives due consideration to the statewide and local interests. The authors used variables related to knowledge accessibility, the press for achievement, and professional teaching conditions to construct seven instruments for evaluation to allow the district to compare itself to similar districts. One table lists the variables. (Contains 30 references.) (SLD)

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The Role of Evaluation in Systemic Change in Education
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ABSTRACT

The current wave of reform in education, often referred to as systemic change, is made up of two philosophically and politically different elements. One, responding to years of unsuccessful reform that first focussed on adoption of exemplary instructional materials and then attempted to mandate teaching behaviors, calls for restructuring the systems of education to place authority and accountability at the local level. And do so through processes that involve all concerned in the decision making. The other, responding to the frustration of American students falling behind in conceptual understanding, skill levels, and ability to apply knowledge and skills in comparison to other nations, calls for national standards, nationally specified curricula, and increased national standardized testing. Evaluation plays a key role for both these elements. For the latter it is a well established role based on years of research in testing and measurement. For the former, new theoretical bases have been developed, practices to support this work have begun to emerge and evaluators are struggling with new roles.

This paper suggests the nature of the specific evaluation needs in a world of systemic change, especially at the school district level, and describes work in progress which seeks to meet those needs. The authors are co-evaluators of the Michigan Statewide Systemic Initiative, a National Science Foundation sponsored program for reform of mathematics and science education. Evaluation strategies described serve both local districts engaged in restructuring and state and national program personnel and policymakers.

The Role of Evaluation in Systemic Change in Education

> There must be a fundamental change in the way that education research and evaluation are perceived and conducted . . The era of the objective observer of education reform, standing off at a distance and evaluating what goes on is a completely passe notion. Evaluation, observation, and research has to be an integral part of and directly involved in the change process, because otherwise it means nothing.
>
> Anonymous, Science Education for the 1990's, St.John, 1992, p.48

The history American education in the 20th Century and in particular the last 30 years is told differently by different writers seeking to support political positions or newly proposed program directions. Nonetheless, almost without exception the word being used to describe the most recent efforts for improvement is restructuring (Darling-Hammond, 1993). Some date serious efforts to change American education to the publishing of A Nation at Risk (Bell, 1993), others describe at least 30 years of school reform and seek in restructuring a "new" wave that holds the most promise for success (Sashkin & Egermeier, 1992). Fullan (1991) describes the most recent decade as a tug of war between two opposing reform approaches, intensification and restructuring. According to Fullan, both are comprehensive, intending systematic change; but they are philosophically and politically at odds. He defines intensification as including increased definition of curriculum, mandated textbooks, standardized tests aligned with curriculum, and specified educational methods backed up by evaluation and monitoring.

In contrast, restructuring involves a release of tight controls to permit local decision making through such forms as site-based management, increased professionalization of teachers, restructured schedules and timetables, shared values and goals, and new roles for students, teachers, administrators, and policymakers. Darling-Hammond (1993) posits a similar dichotomy calling the two competing models the Theory X type based on standardization and tightened controls and the other, the new paradigm of school reform with roots in progressivism, seeking to develop communities of learning. She speaks out strongly for new policies that support schools in the process of developing democratic discourse as they move to become such communities of shared purpose.

Neither of these two competing movements is going to go away in the near future. And in fact, real systemic change in education requires the maintenance of a tension between top down mandated standards with clearly defined outcomes as goals, and locally derived goals and objectives with the ways and means to achieve standards and produce the outcomes all children deserve. Evaluation has played, and continues to play a significant role in the intensification movement. The art

and science of large scale measurement is well developed. This is not true for evaluation at the local level in an era of restructuring. A different theoretical and philosophical stance is required of evaluation and new capabilities must be developed in evaluators and in the users of evaluation reports.

The term systemic change is a priori applied across levels of the educational 'system' and hence readily encompasses both sides of the dichotomy. This can make it a more useful term to apply to educational change today than restructuring. It is important, however, that the need for serious restructuring be understood and implemented at all levels if meaningful change is to occur in American education. Sashkin and Egermeier (1992) offer this definition:

> Restructuring involves changes in roles, rules, and relationships between and among students and teachers, teachers and administrators, and administrators at various levels from the school building to the district office to the State level, all with the aim of improving student outcomes. (p. 12)

The missing element are the policymakers. When their voice is included and it is understood that their roles, rules, and relationships must also be restructured, the stage is set for meaningful change.

What Have We learned From Failed Reform Efforts? There is no question among policymakers, researchers, and educators that the efforts of the past have failed. Roemer (1991) writes poignantly of a collaborative effort at school reform between secondary school and university faculty that failed. Kirst (1993) discusses the weaknesses of the American education system on the other side of a decade of reform. Sashkin and Egermeier (1992) systematically document three waves of reform (fix the parts, fix the people, and fix the school) that can improve education but "change based on either one or some combination of these strategies is incremental, is often temporary, and is sometimes totally absent - or even for the worse" (p. 16).

Fortunately we have learned much from the experiences of decades of reform that can shape new successful strategies for systemic change. The Wingspread Conference (St.John, 1992) on strategies for systemic change in science education developed a list of 27 characteristics to contrast a project-based change model with a systemic change approach. The authors condensed the list into the following 5 systemic approaches: (a) build the infrastructure for reform, replacing system elements rather than adding new ones, (b) build on system strengths rather than fixing deficits, (c) understand that reform is a long term evolving process, (d) focus change on oneself first rather than on others, building capacities and marshalling resources and (e) place power in the hands of those in the system. Several writers emphasize the need to change the culture of the school to support systemic change

(Darling-Hammond, 1993; Fullan, 1991; Sarason, S.B., 1990; Sashkin & Egermeier, 1992). Thus two themes predominate, involve everyone who has a concern in the change process, and provide them the capacity, authority, and methods to succeed.

At a more detailed level, Fullan (1991) offers a careful analysis of how change is initiated and then carried out. He identifies eight factors associated with initiation: (a) The existence and quality of innovations, (b) access to such innovations, (c) advocacy from central administration, (d) teacher advocacy, (e) the involvement of external change agents or facilitators, (f) community pressure/support/apathy, (g) new policies and funds from the state or national level, and (h) the capacity of the district to problem-solve and not be hamstrung by bureaucracy.

Newman (1993) sums up the lessons of past reform concluding we know what to do, and asks, why haven't we put into practice what we know. From an informal poll of state and national policymakers he identified five barriers to changing the system: (a) there is not a critical mass of people who understand what systemic change is, (b) there is no unified, turfless or widely shared vision for education in a state, (c) the policy making process is fragmented, (d) systemic change is complex, enormous, and politically difficult to manage, and (e) the public doesn't see the need for change. The domain for evaluation of systemic change efforts therefore includes the approaches used, the culture in which it occurs, the understanding of the array of factors brought to bear and a knowledge of barriers.

Broad Assumptions for Evaluation in a Systemic Change Process Drawing from these lessons learned and the perceived barriers, the authors in their work with the evaluation of the Michigan Statewide Systemic Initiative (MSSI), have worked under several broad assumptions. The evaluation must address both dimensions of systemic change, the local district effort for systemic reform or restructuring and the state and national need to demonstrate accomplishment of student outcomes and adherence to professional standards for mathematics and science education. Each is dependent on the other for direction and on the other's full understanding of the systemic change process for success. Therefore both must be addressed in concert. More critically, the evaluation must itself model and therefore support the strategies for successful systemic change learned from the preceding decades. As MSSI evaluators we work under these premises: 1) everyone is a stakeholder in the evaluation, parents, students, teachers, administrators, the business community, policymakers, government agencies, the general public; 2) stakeholders need to be actively and collaboratively involved in the evaluation; 3) there must be a shared vision and purpose undergirding the evaluation; 4) the evaluation serves two masters, accountability and the planning/strategizing process to carry out systemic change; 5) evaluative information must be user-friendly and available promptly for decision making;

and, 6) all of those involved in the evaluation must build new capacities to conduct and use evaluation in a systemic change effort.

The section that follows draws upon current work in evaluation describing several more recently developed approaches which may serve as resources for systemic change evaluation.

Emergent Approaches to Evaluation Applicable to Systemic Change Evaluation

Joseph S. Wholey writes to evaluators from a long and distinguished career in evaluation in federal programming. His primary concern is the use, or lack of use, of evaluation information by program managers to improve programming. With his focus on government social programs and his belief in their mandate to be responsive to public needs, his voice is particularly relevant to reform in education. He notes that government programs, like educational systems, are rarely terminated and therefore all the more must be constantly reviewed for improvement. Thus for Wholey, program evaluation must be directed toward program management needs. He defines it accordingly: "Program evaluation is the measurement of program performance, the making of comparisons based on those measurements, and the use of the resulting information in policy-making and program management" (1979,p.1). From this position he moves toward identifying why program managers were not using program evaluations and how evaluation might change to increase use. One direction he suggests is in the role of evaluators:

> The new evaluator role is a program advocate - not an advocate in the sense of an ideologue willing to manipulate data and to alter findings to secure next year's funding. The new evaluator is someone who believes in and is interested in helping programs and organizations succeed. At times the program advocate evaluator will play the traditional critic role: challenging basic program assumptions, reporting lackluster performance, or identifying inefficiencies. The difference, however, is that criticism is not the end of performance-oriented evaluation; rather it is part of a larger process of program and organizational improvement, a process that receives as much of the evaluator's attention and talent as the criticism function. (Bellavita, Wholey, & Abramson, 1986, p.289).

In his 1979 article Wholey also describes evaluation tools which he believes can assist in carrying out such a role: evaluability assessment, rapid feedback evaluation, performance monitoring, and intensive evaluation.

Lee J. Cronbach and associates in their 1980 book Toward Reform of Program Evaluation called for a transformation of evaluation in order to meet its mission "to facilitate a democratic, pluralistic process by enlightening all the participants" (p. 1). With this mission in mind, he strongly criticizes usual assumptions about

appropriate practices in evaluation and suggests that "an evaluative study of a social program is justified to the extent that it facilitates the work of the polity. It is therefore to be judged primarily by its contribution to public thinking" (1980, p. 64). His contribution to the evaluation of systemic change in education is therefore, not unlike Wholey's, a refocussing of energies on serving the public good. He has much to teach the evaluator about the stages of program development and the role of evaluation at different stages. One model that may be of particular help to systemic change evaluation is the concept of a Social Problem Study Group. The group would be made up of members representing all concerned parties and would study problems in the broadest possible way. They would keep themselves informed by listening to the entire array of stakeholders and would develop a comprehensive interpretation of the progress of the reform, not tied to any one source. The Social Problem Study Group would constantly reformulate key questions for the evaluation to address and keep the work in the proper time perspective for all audiences (Cronbach et.al., 1980).

Other more recent writers have addressed the involvement of stakeholders in the evaluation itself. Fetterman (1993a) in his book, Speaking the Language of Power: Communication, Collaboration, and Advocacy, develops the concept of empowerment evaluation. In an unpublished paper addressed to the members of the American Evaluation Association he says, "Empowerment evaluation is the use of evaluation concepts and techniques to foster self-determination. The focus is on helping people help themselves. This evaluation approach is problem focussed, collaborative, and requires both qualitative and quantitative methodologies" (Fetterman, 1993b).

Guba and Lincoln have fully developed what they designate as a new generation in evaluation in their 1989 book, Fourth Generation Evaluation. They characterize it as responsive constructivist evaluation, responsive in that it determines parameters and boundaries through an interactive, negotiated process; constructivist in methodology that rejects the scientific experimental approach in favor of creating a constructed reality that incorporates the observer/observed interaction. The processes of fourth generation evaluation entail identifying all the relevant stakeholders, and eliciting from them the claims, concerns, and issues they wish to raise. Then the evaluation provides a context and a methodology through which these persons and their concerns are part of a negotiated evaluation process up to and including generated reports. Here, too, the role of the evaluator requires different skills than usually though necessary.

Donmeyer (1991) also draws his theoretical underpinnings from the postpositivist paradigm. His emphasis is on the political nature of knowledge. He reconceptualizes evaluation, basing it on six assumptions: educational issues are ultimately more conceptual than empirical, questions of meaning should be addressed as part of the evaluation, meanings are not true or false but must be

resolved through discourse, if questions of meaning are resolved the 'truth' may be discernible, and the evaluation should produce not only recommendations for change, but also expand the understanding of the participants in the evaluation. He translates these assumptions into a six-stage evaluation process including the formation of a representative forum and a consensus process for resolving issues.

These are just a few examples from an emerging literature supporting the philosophical precepts of successful systemic change as we now understand it. Practices to support the evaluation of systemic change efforts are also evolving, several currently in use are described below. In all cases, the role of the evaluator is expanding and changing as is the role of the evaluation itself.

Work in Progress in Systemic Change Evaluation: the MSSI Experience The Michigan Statewide Systemic Initiative in mathematics and science education, funded by the National Science Foundation as part of a national reform program, was created to reform education using a systemic change approach. A shared statewide vision for mathematics and science learning and teaching for all students and teachers underlies the effort. The State already had developed core curricula and essential goals and objectives. Emphases are on improving outcomes for all students with special attention given to those underrepresented in mathematics and the sciences and on those who live in extreme urban and rural areas perceived to have less access to resources to support mathematics and science education. Components of the initiative include an examination of existing policies and programs at the state and local level, a coordinated approach to reforming teacher education, connecting the wide variety of other initiatives in mathematics and science education in the state for dissemination and professional development, and the selection of a group of local districts to become model districts in undergoing systemic change efforts. The model districts are expected to develop community coalitions to support reform and create action plans that are based on a systemic change philosophy. The evaluators serve as members of the MSSI Management Team.

The authors proposed a collaborative, constructivist approach to the evaluation from the beginning, with an emergent design flexible enough to meet the changing needs of the MSSI program. Such an approach was well received locally and in Washington. Four broad evaluation questions form the core of the evaluation. Two are concerned with long term student and teacher outcomes, two are focussed on the success of the systemic change process. In the material that follows several strategies of the evaluation are described that are intended to accomplish the work under the premises listed earlier in the chapter.

Strategies for Statewide Systemic Reform Evaluation Four primary strategies strengthen the evaluation at the state level: internalization of the evaluation in the strategic plans for each component, the creation of The Evaluation Collegium,

the use of a metaevaluation panel, and the restructuring of the state database for educational information.

The evaluators facilitated a strategic planning process for the components as a prelude to and a basis for the development of the evaluation plan. Each component director and staff reviewed and revised the long term goals from the proposal and developed end of project objectives for the component. The entire MSSI Management Team then reviewed the group of goals and objectives. The evaluators developed a list of evaluation questions for each component to match the goals and strategies proposed. These questions examine three aspects of the work: the intended outcomes and whether they are obtained, the context in which the work is carried out, and the actualization of the planned implementation. The latter two types of questions are essential to understanding systemic change - outcomes alone will neither provide useful information to program staff nor make data available about the various sources which may influence an outcome. Once the expected outcomes and the evaluation questions had been negotiated the component directors developed plans for the year with timelines and responsibilities. These were also reviewed for feasibility and the systemic characteristics of the plan. Next the evaluators developed the evaluation plan for each component by identifying process and outcome indicators for both the one year plan and for the five year goals and objectives. These were also negotiated and data collection responsibilities assigned to either evaluators or component staff. This has proved to be an efficient and effective method for collaboratively involving the component staff. Additional stakeholders are reached through individual evaluations. School district personnel who attended a first technical assistance session, for example, completed a survey instrument. The data were compiled within two days and returned to the project staff for modification of the next session. At the next session, the district personnel were provided with a summary of their evaluation feedback and asked for further comments. Periodic interviews are used for stakeholders who have a more sustained involvement with the work. Again, the information gained is intended as much, if not more, for shaping the work in progress than for summative purposes.

Even with the careful inclusion of stakeholders in the strategic planning process and the collection of data from a variety of involved persons, there was concern that a large number of important stakeholders might be overlooked. With this in mind the evaluators formed The MSSI Evaluation Collegium, an informally organized statewide open membership 'group' who agreed to be the eyes and ears of the evaluation as they attended to their usual work in science and mathematics education. Members of several existing organizations were encouraged to participate and a membership list created. These members receive the MSSI evaluation newsletter, Valuing, and are periodically asked in the newsletter to respond to brief questionnaires or to survey their constituents or local districts about recent initiatives. Presentations at statewide educator conferences are also

used to engage stakeholders in the evaluation and obtain their feedback.

A carefully selected metaevaluation panel has been created, made up of persons within and outside of Michigan involved in systemic reform related to mathematics and science education. Whereas the usual emphasis of such a panel might be on the adherence to standards for exemplary evaluations, the concern for this panel is whether the evaluation is capturing the complex variables needed for systemic change evaluation and whether it embodies systemic change thinking in its plans and procedures.

Finally, a key strategy originally intended to be especially responsive to the results/outcomes oriented stakeholders, the MSSI database, has already demonstrated the importance of information to the entire systemic change process. The Michigan Department of Education has been extremely cooperative in providing access to existing data. The condition of the available data is a dramatic indication of why previous attempts at reform have met with limited success. Data have never been collected that are defined and organized to serve the needs of program improvement. Data that are collected are strictly accountability data and the requesting agents are not program managers but external report writers simply wishing to plug a number into a report field. These external persons have tended to be in charge of the definitions and frequency of data collection. Local districts or state program persons seldom see the use of the data to correct misperceptions nor do they have access to findings. For example, the number of middle school teachers teaching mathematics was recently grossly underreported for the State because of such problems and only picked up when the national report came out and the problem was revealed. In addition to directing data collection and analysis to program improvement, systemic change requires entire new areas of data collection, e.g. the nature of actual classroom teaching, the preparation of teachers in new modes of teaching, decision making processes in use, school improvement plans, state and local policies and procedures that provide for or restrict change, and facilities and materials and their accessibility. For these reasons the evaluation includes the development of a database, involving far reaching decisions on what is collected and how, guided by systemic change needs. Such a database itself becomes a part of the change process and the infrastructure for continuing change.

It is inevitable that additional strategies for evaluation that measure and support statewide change will emerge and some of those now in use will fail and be discarded. Those that are necessary and effective in Michigan may not be relevant in other settings. We offer them only as directions in which to look in forming systemic change evaluations at the state level.

Strategies for Local District Systemic Reform Evaluation As part of the MSSI effort, a group of local school districts has been selected from among those that

submitted proposals/action plans to participate in a four year process of systemic change, including an emphasis on building community coalitions to support reform. The selected model districts will not only carry out their independent plans but they will also be expected to operate as a group. The design for the work of the districts as a group has been drawn from the evaluators' work with cluster evaluation (Barley & Jenness, 1993a, 1993b; Jenness & Barley, 1992a; Jenness & Barley, 1992b). This strategy is discussed more fully in the material that follows.

Four strategies for evaluation at the local level are currently underway, others will certainly be required; two, evaluation of contextual indicators and focus groups on change, apply to specific issues, and two, as briefly mentioned above, action plans and cluster evaluation, are broad strategies.

As mentioned in the section on the database, an area of importance in developing action plans for districts is the local context. The evaluators have developed two approaches to assessing local context, one assesses the context to support student achievement and the other the context to support change itself. The first is an instrument to assess a set of contextual indicators. Jeanne Oakes (1989) reviewed the literature on student achievement in math and science "to identify policy-relevant school-level indicators . . . (that) promise to be useful for monitoring and improvement" (p. 182). She makes the case: "Context indicators can be used to measure schooling resources and processes: they may help forestall educators' tendency to narrow their programs in order to "look good" on limited outcome measures; and they can provide information about the context in which particular outcomes are achieved" (p. 181). Oakes (1989) organizes the findings from the literature into three composite school-level indicators: access to knowledge, press for achievement, and professional conditions for teaching. Under each of these concepts are a list of variables that together can form indices for the indicators. See Table 1.

Table 1 Variables Related to School Context Indicators

ACCESS TO KNOWLEDGE

Teacher Qualifications
Instructional Time
Course Offerings
Class Grouping Practices
Materials, Laboratories, Equipment
Academic Support Programs
Enrichment Activities
Parent Involvement
Staff Development
Faculty Beliefs

PRESS FOR ACHIEVEMENT

Focus on Academics
Graduation Requirements
Graduation Rates
Enrollment in Rigorous Programs
Recognition of Academic Accomplishments
Academic Expectations for Students
Uninterrupted Class Instruction
Administrative Involvement in Academics
Quantity and Type of Homework
Teacher Evaluation Emphasizing Learning

PROFESSIONAL TEACHING CONDITIONS

Teacher Salaries
Pupil Load/Class Size
Teacher Time for Planning
Collegial Work
Teacher Involvement in Decision-making
Teacher Certainty
Teacher Autonomy/Flexibility
Administrative Support for Innovation
Clerical Support

Using these variables the evaluators constructed a set of seven instruments, a district superintendent survey, principal surveys for each level (elementary, middle, and secondary), and three teacher surveys according to level. Results from the surveys allow the district to compare itself to similar districts, to

compare teacher responses with principals, and to assess areas of contextual strengths and weaknesses for consideration in action planning. For the MSSI Management Team the results present a picture of Michigan school context across a variety of district types as a tool in planning inservices, focusing RFPs, awarding federal pass through funds, and designing technical assistances for the model districts.

Many authors writing on systemic change in local school districts speak to problems connected with organizational readiness (Dellar, 1993; Fullan, 1991; Jenlink, 1993). As Dellar indicates, "while the impetus and direction for reform might stem from forces external to the school, it is the school-level personnel that require both the preparedness and capacity to implement change" (1993, p.2). In his work, Dellar has used two questionnaires in addition to interviews and other data sources. The School Organisational Climate Questionnaire (Dellar, 1990) gathers information about decision-making, innovation and change. The second questionnaire is administrated to staff members and contains information on principal leadership style, administrative decision-making, sub-system linkage, and attitudes towards restructuring (Dellar, 1993). From his findings, Dellar recommends assessing school organizational climate to determine readiness and, where the climate is poor, work toward improving the climate before undertaking major restructuring efforts. He also suggests that if sub-system linkages are weak because of the dominance of, for example, departmental allegiances, supporting and strengthening linkages should be part of the plan. Finally, he recommends strategies to develop for leaders knowledge and skills for multi-directional communication and authentic participatory decision-making, for collaboration such as consensus building, and for decision-making such as strategic planning, priority setting or evaluation.

Jenlink (1993) describes the use in a 2500 pupil, eight building school district of a focus group interview method based on Krueger's document on focus groups (1990) to assess readiness for organizational change. Jenlink conducted 24 focus groups within the district including groups of students, teachers, administrators, auxiliary personnel and citizens. Group interviews focussed on the need for change, identification of stakeholders for district change, kinds of changes, and the district's track record for change. The authors have planned the use of focus groups in the MSSI model districts as an assessment tool for use by the model's leadership and as a measure of context as a contributing factor in relative success or failure of the reform efforts.

The nature of the development of an action plan or strategic plan for systemic change in local school districts varies dependent on the district's history of planning. In some districts a school improvement plan may exist that in itself suggests excellent direction but lacks a systemic approach. In other districts a failed strategic planning effort may be a stumbling block to all planning efforts for

a period of time. Some districts have a variety of specific plans with no connections between them. How the action plan for systemic change is shaped depends to a large extent on this backdrop. A need for capacity building for planning is another important factor. There are good resources available both for a simple but effective how-to (Barry, 1988) and for more extensive discussions of the issues (e.g. Steiner, 1979). The value of the planning process lies in the involvement of stakeholders, in learning collaborative, consensual working processes, in developing ownership of the systemic change process, in allocating workload and setting timelines, in planning for monitoring of success and failure and of implementation, and in determining the need for new resources and training.

Finally, a cluster evaluation approach has proven to have value at the district level and may be useful for smaller change units within a large district. The authors have described cluster evaluation extensively elsewhere (Barley & Jenness, 1993). A cluster is a group of districts, or other entities, setting out to accomplish similar purposes within somewhat similar settings. The authors have worked extensively with two clusters of 12 districts or entities funded by the W.K.Kellogg Foundation to improve science education, a voluntary network (cluster) of 22 independent mathematics and science centers, and are now working with the group of 25 MSSI model districts. The cluster entails bringing districts together up front to define common objectives, agree upon common data collection methods and instruments, better prepare staff in evaluation, and provide mutual strengthening through regular networking conferences. The conferences serve as important occasions to build capacities, master new content, share lessons learned, joint problem solve, and share resources. In an effort such as systemic change for which new ways of thinking and doing business must be mastered, the help that can be obtained through a common effort is essential. Administrators find colleagues in learning new roles, teachers find other models for relating and teaching, community members find ways to tap community resources and change community attitudes. As a group, the cluster has more power to influence policymakers or leverage resources. For the evaluators, the common elements of the change process and common monitoring methods, contrasted with different local contexts and implementation strategies presents a rich environment to learn about systemic change.

Conclusions The role of evaluation in systemic change can and should be central. The success of systemic change initiatives is dependent on information both in order to make critical decisions about the work and to continuously involve stakeholders in the ongoing process. Evaluators can not sit back and hold on to information nor have the luxury of developing it on a timeframe that suits summative purposes but denies immediate program management needs. Evaluators musty be advocates when their data show a need to move in a particular direction.

Because of the collaborative nature of systemic change, the centrality of information, and the need for capacity building in evaluation; evaluators become educators in the knowledges and skills that make for good systemic change evaluation. To engage all key players means granting them not only the capacity but also the authority - power - to change the course of events. Evaluators must then become negotiators attempting to persuade but willing to yield, in arriving at an evaluative process that serves the program effectively. Fundamental changes are not easy but trends in the discipline of evaluation have provided insights and directions. Methods have begun to emerge to support such efforts. And for evaluators to see their work become part of sweeping changes in education rather than gather dust on shelves is reward indeed.

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